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Beauty at Every Age

OUR 40+ MODEL-SEARCH WINNER HAS THE SECRETS (AND SO CAN YOU)

HOW LONG WILL YOU BE FERTILE?
THE NEW TEST THAT CAN TELL

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BodyMIND
BY DR. SHARON SHARON, M.D.

HEALTH NEWS & VIEWS

Test your ovaries. Best to your reproductive health!

CAN A TEST REVEAL YOUR REPRODUCTIVE AGE?

THE HYPE: MEASURE YOUR OVARIES BY ULTRASOUND, AND A FERTILITY SPECIALIST CAN ASSESS HOW MUCH LONGER YOU'LL BE FERTILE AS WELL AS WHEN YOU'LL HIT MENOPAUSE.

THE TRUTH: By measuring the size and shape of your ovaries, a transvaginal ultrasound can indeed predict how long you'll stay fertile. Reproductive endocrinologist **Felix Shinar, MD,** and his colleagues at the Virginia Center for Reproductive Medicine in Boston have been offering this test for seven years. Shinar explains that you're born with all the eggs you'll ever have, but that number declines at varying rates among women, making chronological age an unreliable gauge. "I have seen 44-year-old women with remarkably plump, youthful ovaries who have little trouble conceiving a child," he says, "as well as the reverse—women in their twenties with the shrunken ovaries of someone 11 years older and corresponding difficulty conceiving."

The test is most useful if you are struggling with fertility problems. If your ovaries are relatively healthy, it may be an easier decision to drop \$30,000 on a try at in vitro fertilization. Since menopause typically occurs between 44 and 54, the scan could also help doctors determine whether health complaints are truly related to the change of life, or due to some other condition. While relatively quick (five to ten minutes) and cheap (\$300, often reimbursable by insurance), the so-called ovarian reserve test is offered by only a few specialists in the U.S. Log on to the American Society for Reproductive Medicine's Web site (www.asrm.org) for a reproductive endocrinologist who does the procedure.

20
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